



Women's Regional Network (WRN) is a collective network of women within and beyond borders committed to strengthening the security of women and enhancing women's leadership to take action in preventing conflict, building peace, and protecting women's rights in South Asia and beyond.

What's Happening

It has been a busy spring for the Women's Regional Network with report launches across the region, high level advocacy, and participation in national and regional symposiums. The environment for the operation of the Women's Regional Network has been increasingly hostile with the crackdown by governments on civil society spaces and WHRDs, continuing, security threats, politicized violence, and an extreme global funding shortage for the work on women, peace, and security.

Afghanistan

WRN had 3 members from the region, Rita Manchanda, Anuradha Bhasin, and Bushra Gohar, attend the high level meeting hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Afghanistan and the First Lady of Afghanistan at the fourth symposium held on the issues of Afghan women entitled: *Afghan Women: Messengers of Peace*. This was a critical meeting to bring together key stakeholders from across the region to highlight the importance of

women's roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, as well as the importance of regional connections and ties between women. This is precisely the work of the WRN.

Anuradha Bhasin, WRN Member from India and editor of the Kashmir Times, reflects on the conference in a three part series entitled 'Afghan Diaries'. Read the three pieces here: [*Snapshots from Kabul: New political fault lines*](#); [*Postcards from Kabul: Guns and roses*](#); [*Snapshots from Kabul: Afghanistan's women of substance*](#).



WRN Members, Palwasha Hassan (Afghanistan), Rita Manchanda (India) and Bushra Gohar (Pakistan) present on the high level panel on regional solutions for peace at the three day Symposium 'Afghan Women: Messengers of Peace', in Kabul.

India

WRN India held two internal meetings in February and April, 2017 with members from across India. New members have been brought in with a focus on ensuring minority community voices are heard. These new members include a Catholic nun and grassroots community activist as well as increasing representation from India's marginalized Northeast. The WRN is also focusing, as part of a larger regional mission, to mentor young women and thus bring in young women from remote areas and conflict zones.



WRN Community Conversation Launch, India International Centre, Delhi.

Pakistan

The Pakistan team held an internal meeting and celebrated the One Billion Rising campaign together at Rozan House (*pictured below*). The Pakistan Core team has grown to include representation from all provinces including The Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and ensures that ethnic and religious minority voices along with young women students and activists are represented within the Network. The team undertook several advocacy meetings to share the recent work of the WRN and promote the concept of regional and cross-border initiatives. The final launch of the WRN Pakistan report was held in Islamabad on May 24, 2017. Key stakeholders attended the Islamabad launch including the Ambassador of Sweden and Hungary as well as relevant civil society, media, and UN agencies.



Supporting Young Women

WRN Internships

The WRN has recently had two interns with us: Trishna Rana, Sie Fellow, former editor and journalist from Nepal, and Ingrid von Kleydorff, undergraduate International Studies and Spanish major, both from the University of Denver. Our former intern, Christina Ibanez, like Trishna, was also a student at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies where key work on women, peace and security is taking place with the [Inclusive Global Leadership Initiative](#). The WRN will continue this internship opportunity as part of its commitment to mentoring young women.

Emerging Young Women Leaders Congress (EYWLC)

WRN, along with the Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies (IPD), the Government of Australia, and The City School supported the Emerging Young Women Leaders Congress, 2017. Exceptional young women leaders came to Islamabad from across the country in order to engage in intergenerational dialogue with some of Pakistan's key women leaders, politicians, and activists. In her opening remarks, Kishwar Sultana highlighted the importance of women in peace and security: *"We women, no matter where we live, either in Assam in India, Kunduz in Afghanistan or Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan, during militarization or Taliban occupation, we have the same realities and go through similar challenges. Our civil liberties are always being challenged, our our rights are always at stake during peace negotiations."* Read more about the 2017 EYWLC [here](#).

Original Content

WRN has started a new original content space where our members and advisors are writing articles and reacting to events in the field, we are conducting interviews with women from South Asia as well as international experts! Don't miss this exciting new content and take a look [here](#).

Global Connections

WRN and the Universal Periodic Review in Pakistan

Author of our latest community conversation report and newly appointed board member, Rukhshanda Naz (Pakistan), spearheaded consultations for a shadow report for the Universal Periodic Review process based heavily on the issues and concerns raised by IDP women in WRN's field research. This is a key opportunity to ensure IDP women's voices are heard.

Civil Society Work in Canada

WRN Member and Former Chief of Staff to the First Lady of Afghanistan Hossai Wardak

attended the *Looking Back, Looking Forward: Consultations on Canada's WPS National Action Plan* sponsored by Global Affairs Canada, where the Canadian government took key recommendations from civil society to renew their NAP on UNSCR 1325.

WRN Member as New Fellow at the University of Chicago

Judge Najla Ayoubi, a fellow of the University of Chicago Institute of Politics, conducted an exciting series of lectures on the role of women in state building, leadership and the importance of regional connections. Listen to her latest interview with National Public Radio: [Attacks In Iran, Peace Talks In Afghanistan And Global Notes](#).

N-Peace Award and WRN Candidates

WRN has submitted some of our stellar members as candidates for the N-Peace Award. Keep an eye out for our selections: Sajia Begham (Afghanistan), Judge Homa Alizoy (Afghanistan), Rukhshanda Naz (Pakistan), and Farhat Asif (Pakistan). Read more about the N-Peace Award [here](#).

WRN Participation in UNGA Migration Process, New York

In May, Rukhshanda Naz (Pakistan) represented WRN in the UN General Assembly Preparatory Process for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. She officially addressed the committee with reference to the gendered recommendations from her field research on women Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from North and South



Waziristan, Pakistan. She provided a regional lens on issues including militarization and extremism, state policies, legal frameworks, and reconstruction and reconciliation.

WRN Annual Board Meeting

At the end of May 2017, the WRN Board of Directors held their annual meeting, the second since the official Board has been established as a *Stichting* Nonprofit Foundation in The Netherlands. The board has adopted a series of foundational internal policies and brought on new Directors from the region including Rukshanda Naz (Peshawar, Pakistan) and Swarna Ragagopalan (Chennai, India). WRN has also established the programmatic priorities for the year which will be implemented with the generous support of NoVo Foundation, Channel Foundation, and other supporters of the WRN.



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